

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3122

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1941

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EMIN, EFIN, EINV, PINT, MR

SUBJECT: OULD DADDAH PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: NOUAKCHOTT A-59

SUMMARY: DURING COURSE OF UNUSUAL TWO AND ONE HALF-HOUR PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED DECEMBER 6 TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RESULTING FROM MIFERMA NATIONALIZATION, PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH SPENT MAJORITY OF THE TIME DISCUSSING BOTH DEMOCRATIC REFORM AND DISAFFECTION OF MAURITANIAN YOUTH WHICH HE PLEDGED WOULD BE PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS OF JULY 1 PARTY CONGRESS.

1. MIFERMA: PRESIDENT REEMPHASIZED THAT GIRM WOULD REPAY MIFERMA DEBTS (\$10.2 MILLION TO WORLD BANK (IFC) AND \$15.5 MILLION TO FRENCH CAISSE CENTRALE), NEGOTIATE COMPENSATION FOR MINE INVESTORS AND CONTINUE MINE OPERATIONS AS BEFORE. HE STRESSED NO FURTHER NATIONALIZATIONS WERE
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PLANNED AND MAURITANIA WOULD CONTINUE WELCOME FOREIGN

INVESTORS. OULD DADDAH NOTED MIFERMA NATIONALIZATION CAPPED DRIVE FOR "ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE" ANNOUNCED AT PARTY CONGRESS IN 1971 AND MADE POSSIBLE BY CREATION NATIONAL CURRENCY IN 1973.

2. DEMOCRATIC REFORM: CONFIRMING EMBASSY PREDICTION (REFAIR) PRESIDENT SAID JULY 1 PARTY CONGRESS WOULD CONCENTRATE ON EXPANDING DEMOCRACY WITHIN PARTY AND NATION. HE SAID PLATFORM OF LAST PARTY CONGRESS IN 1971 PROMISED "ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND DEMOCRATIC INDEPENDENCE" BUT NOTED ONLY IN DEMOCRATIC REFORM "HAVE WE NOT MADE MUCH PROGRESS." PRESIDENT REFUSED DISCUSS WHAT ACTIONS HE WOULD RECOMMEND TO PARTY CONGRESS, BUT POINTED OUT ONLY LEGAL FORUM FOR NATIONAL DEBATE IS SINGLE NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTY (JIRTI DU PEUPLE MAURITANIEN) AND APPEALED TO YOUTH AND DISSIDENTS TO JOIN PARTY NOW DURING HOUR OF NATIONAL UNITY CREATED BY NEAR UNIVERSAL APPROVAL MIFERMA NATIONALIZATION.

3. YOUTH: IN FRIENDLY BUT POINTED Q AND A BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND REPORTERS, OULD DADDAH MADE FOLLOWING POINTS: A) YOUTH SHOULD ORGANIZE AND TAKE ACTIVE PART IN GREAT DECISIONS BEING MADE; B) THIS "LAST CHANCE" BEFORE COUNTRY'S FUTURE PATH FULLY DETERMINED; C) PARTY WILLING ACCEPT YOUTH ORGANIZATION AS INTEGRAL UNIT; D) DISSIDENCE WILL BE ALLOWED AS LONG AS IT DOES NOT RESULT IN CIVIL DISORDER; E) GOVT PLANS NO GENERAL AMNESTY FOR "HANDFUL" OF DISSIDENTS UNDER DETENTION.

4. COMMENT: PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED TO REASSURE FRENCH AND OTHER INVESTORS ABOUT INDEMNIFICATION AND DEBT PAYMENTS FOR MIFERMA, BUT WAS TWO-THIRDS DEVOTED DOMESTIC POLITICS REFLECTING PRESIDENT'S INCREASING CONCERN. UNUSUALLY FRANK CONFERENCE TEXT, INCLUDING ADMISSION NEED FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM, CARRIED BY BOTH RADIO AND PRESS AND SEEMS TO BE PRESIDENT'S FIRST PUBLIC EFFORT LIBERALIZE DOMESTIC DIALOGUE WITH YOUTH. OULD DADDAH ALSO NOTED (TRUTHFULLY) THAT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT MUST LOOK LIKE "REACTIONAIRES" TO THE YOUTH OF MAURITANAI.

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5. PRESIDENT IS DELIBERATE AND LOGICAL MAN WHO TAKES HIS PROGRAMS, LIKE THE 1971 PARTY PLATFORM SERIOUSLY AND WORKS QUIETLY TOWARD THESE GOALS. UNLESS OPEN HOSTILITY BETWEEN YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT ERUPTS OVER NEXT SIX MONTHS, WE CAN EXPECT PRESIDENT TO BE TRUE TO HIS WORD AND, "WITHIN LIMITS OF THE POSSIBLE," WORK TO CREATE MORE EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION FOR DISSIDENT YOUTH INNATION'S AFFAIRS. SHURTLEFF

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